



Written by [R. Cort Kirkwood](#) on May 13, 2020

Times Reprimands Science Writer for Expressing Opinion. Bio at Website Suggests Zero Academic Science Credentials

[The New York Times](#) has reprimanded its own science writer, who said the director of the Centers for Disease Control, Robert Redfield, must resign because Redfield mishandled the response to the Chinese virus.

But two thought-provoking facts have emerged in the reporting about the story.

First, like most Americans, including President Trump, editors at the *Times* were skeptical that the Chinese virus was and is a serious health risk. Even the reprimanded science scribe, Donald McNeil, noted that he had a hard time convincing the newspaper's top brass to take the Asiatic pathogen seriously.



Second, McNeil demanded Redfield's resignation because the CDC chieftain is incompetent, but McNeil does not hold a university science degree. His only science knowledge, such as it is, comes from writing about it for the *Times*.

McNeil's Remarks

Yet another anti-Trump mainstream media reporter, McNeil heaped blame for coronavirus deaths on Trump and Redfield for not responding to the virus quickly. Yet he let China off the hook, despite the fact that country hid both the release and the dangers of the virus.

"We completely blew it for the first two months of our response," [he told](#) Christine Amanpour. "We were in a headless chicken phase, and yes it's the president's fault, it is not China's fault. The head of the Chinese CDC was on the phone with Robert Redfield on Jan. 1, and on Jan. 8 and the two agencies were talking on Jan. 19. The Chinese had a test on Jan. 13, the Germans had a test on Jan. 16."

Moreover, singing the praises of the Chinese communists — [who permitted](#) Lunar New Year's revelers to flood Wuhan (and then spread the disease widely) at about the time McNeil claims China was "on the phone" with Redfield — [wasn't enough](#): He claimed U.S. lack of leadership caused many deaths.

We fiddled around for two months. We had a test on March 5 and it didn't work. We didn't have 10,000 people tested until March 15. So we lost two months there, and that was because of incompetent leadership at the CDC, I'm sorry to say. It's a great agency, but it's incompetently led and I think Dr. Redfield should resign.

Then McNeil went to the obvious: [Blame Trump again](#):

And suppression from the top: I mean, the real cover-up was the person in this country who was



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saying, “this is not an important virus, the flu is worse, it’s all going to go away it’s nothing.” And that encouraged everybody around him to say, “it’s nothing, it’s nothing, it’s nothing.” I had the same problem at the *Times*. I was trying to convince my editors, this is really bad, this is a pandemic. It took a while to get them, it took a while to get anybody to believe this.

Notably, these claims are being made about a president that the Left uniformly chastised for eliminating flights from China to stave off the disease, calling Trump xenophobic.

Also, given the *Times*’s reach and responsibility to report news, the *Times* bears just as much responsibility as anyone in the Trump administration for downplaying the threat, which might be the real reason the editors hammered down on McNeil.

That said, the *Times* claims it didn’t like McNeil’s demand that Redfield resign.

“Donald McNeil, Jr. went too far in expressing his personal views,” the [newspaper wrote](#) in a prepared statement [for Erik Wemple](#) of the *Washington Post*. “His editors have discussed the issue with him to reiterate that his job is to report the facts and not to offer his own opinions. We are confident that his reporting on science and medicine for the *Times* has been scrupulously fair and accurate.” Apparently, the *Times* didn’t have a problem with McNeil’s attacks on Trump, calling into question any claims the paper makes to fairness and accuracy.

McNeil’s Background

Maybe McNeil is “scrupulously fair and accurate” in his science reporting. But that isn’t because he has any science credentials the way most would categorize them, meaning a degree or some training. If he does, his biography at the *Times*’s website [doesn’t reveal it](#).

McNeil’s bio reports that “he covers diseases of the world’s poor, including AIDS, Ebola, malaria, swine and bird flu, mad cow disease, SARS and so on.” He also wrote a book about the Zika virus.

His science-medical writing “has won awards for stories about cities that have successfully fought AIDS, about patent monopolies that keep drug prices high in Africa, about diseases that cannot be eradicated, about cancer victims in India and Africa dying without pain relief and about the Love Canal toxic waste dump.”

But beyond on-the-job reporting, McNeil has no academic or professional study, training or experience in any scientific discipline.

Rather, [his bio says](#), he “graduated summa cum laude from the University of California at Berkeley in 1975 with a B.A. in rhetoric.”

“He joined the *Times* in 1976 as a copy boy and has been a night rewrite man, an environmental reporter, a theater columnist and an editor,” the [bio reports](#), and he has also written plays and reported for *People* magazine and even taught journalism.

He also plays squash.

H/T: [The Daily Caller](#)

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